

COBIS Poetry Competition 2025/26

Through Another's Eyes

Key Stage 3 Runner-up

Afghan Girl Made of Fireflies

Yesterday, my father told me the world was not meant for girls.

But the sky outside my window did not agree.

You had a 50% chance at life. A
coin spun in the dark—heads for
a flame,
tails for a jar.

You were born glowing,
but someone tightened the lid.

I wonder if I can scrawl my name across the clouds before
anyone notices.

Your place is inside.

kneel at the altar of your father, your
brother,
your cousin,
your husband.

Scrub the tiles until the water clouds with
the ghosts of your dreams.

Remember girl,
look out the window but do not
open.

The dust I sweep up turns into constellations.
When I press my hands into dough,
the earth softens against my palms.

You cannot learn.

Books are for your brothers. Leave
your uniform at the gate.
Knowledge is too heavy for your arms.

Remember girl,
your future is sewn shut before you even touch it.

I dream that words taste like pomegranates,
sweet and red
against my tongue.

You cannot walk alone.

A man must always guard your steps.

Remember girl,
without him
the world is forbidden.

I hear the wind calling my name sometimes.

In partnership with:

What would it be like to run—
feet slapping against the dirt road, skirts billowing no
hand at my wrist—

until my shadow trips behind me
and disappears

You cannot speak.

Curl your voice back into your throat.

Stitch silence—

tight,

tighte

r—

into your
steps.

Remember

girl,

your voice is contraband.

I roll my name against my tongue,
until it trembles into song.

You cannot see a doctor. Nor
can you learn to be one. Your
body must remain unseen,
unheard, untreated. Remember
girl,
pain is your only companion.

I pretend the moon is my healer,
pouring silver into my veins,
stars stitching light into my wounds.

You are not safe in your own home.
Violence is not constricted to darkness. You
will become a statistic.

Remember girl,

a girl's body is not hers to keep.

But even in jars,
fireflies find ways to glow.

Mariam Talibdjanova (age 13)
Haileybury Almaty